**Contexts of Reproduction:**

**Gender Dynamics and Fertility in sub-Saharan Africa**

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**Introduction**

- The African population boom: the societal issue of the 21st century
- Persistently high rates of unintended pregnancy, unmet need, and low age at first birth
- Classic demographic theory poorly explains African fertility outcomes
- Need to consider the role of gender inequality (Dodoo & Frost 2008; Zuberi et al. 2003)

**Gender and population change**

- Academic interest in gender as a factor in population change since the 1980s. Early work on effects of women's education and status (e.g. Mason 1986, 1987; Jejeebhoy 1995; Lloyd et al. 1999).
- Caveats:
  - Relatively few studies have addressed sub-Saharan Africa
  - Focus on women; exclusion of men and gender-power in couples
  - Gender as a property of individuals rather than as a system of inequality
  - African male authority predicated on cultural rights negotiated at marriage → attention needed to the immediate contextual realm

**This study**

1. **Gender dynamics:** power differentials in couples based on intra-household bargaining framework of Sen (1990):
   - 1) gendered division of labor
   - 2) access to and control over resources
   - 3) intra-household-decision-making
   - 4) norms
2. **At household and community level**

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**Data, measures, & methods**

**Data**

- Global Data Lab: large data infrastructure of harmonized household surveys of developing countries. Selection: DHS's sub-Saharan Africa; 1992-2016
- Analytical sample: women pregnant at time of survey or who gave birth in the 5 years prior to the survey: ca. 661,400 women in 2971 communities in 337 regions in 39 countries

**Dependent variables**

- Unintended pregnancy, unmet need, age at first birth

**Key independent variables**

- Educational differential (access to and control over resources)
- Professional status differential (gendered division of labor)
- Spousal age difference (intra-household decision-making)
- Gender preference (norms)

**Controls:** country, year, age at first marriage*, household wealth*, remarried*, household composition*, urban*

* measured at household, and community levels

**Methods:** Two-level (generalized ) linear mixed regression. Households nested in communities; countries as fixed effects dummies

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**Results**

**Figure 1. Continental population estimates and projections, 1950-2100**

**Figure 2. Descriptive statistics of the dependent variables**

**Figure 3. Two-level (generalized ) linear mixed regression estimates**

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**Conclusion and discussion**

- High impact on a range of fertility outcomes of spousal educational equality and women’s high professional status, both at household and community levels. Community effects: synergistic and often strong(er) → importance of context
- Gender norms and intra-household decision-making: results less clear. Community effects both synergistic and countervailing.
- Unmet need and unintended pregnancy are complex concepts: dependent on/indicative of calculus of individuals’ conscious choice?
- Future research: for what groups do different dimensions of the gender context matter and in what ways? (context heterogeneity)

**References (selected)**